

Ed Hutsching, Ed  
P-Smith, R. Harris  
Secret History  
of America's First CIA

# OSS Story . . . It Tops Fiction

**OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency.** By R. Harris Smith (University of California Press: 495 pages, \$10.95).

"For too many years, social scientists have paid scant attention to the broad problem of official secrecy . . . That vacuum ought to be filled. The academicians should form a partnership with journalists in providing the American citizenry with a reasoned and thoughtful critique of the excesses of clandestine bureaucracy. I offered this book as a first step toward extending intellectual public concern.

Thus, R. Harris Smith sums up his preface to "OSS," a monumental work on the birth, life and death of the Office of Strategic Services, which served the nation in World War II. This is no spy thriller of brave deeds done in cloak-and-dagger obscurity, but a reasoned and extremely well-researched book that explores the development of the United States' first all-encompassing intelligence unit, one that ultimately evolved into the CIA.

Utilizing primary sources, such as interviews and correspondence with former members of the OSS as well as manifold documents now in the possession of the Hoover Library at Stanford University, Smith, a former analyst for the CIA, has assembled a remarkable history. If there is any criticism, it is Smith's recent admission that the material he employed is not classified which militates against the use of the word "secret" in the title.

The external jealousies that kept the OSS under constant attack from the State Department, FBI and the military are examined, in addition to the internecine warfare of OSS members themselves. It appears

covert organization that dealt with everyone from Heinrich Himmler to Ho Chi Minh and Marshal Tito to Chiang Kai-shek should have its partisan cliques.

The level of intelligence (mental not espionage) of OSS membership might be a medical research spinoff of Smith's work. Group together Wall Street brokers, corporate lawyers, motion picture celebrities, educators, linguists and even the clergy and Gen. William Donovan's "circuit" becomes about as absorbing a study as any single unit ever run by any government at any time.

Who are these people? John Birch, Herbert Marcuse, Julia Child, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the future Pope Paul VI, Sterling Hayden, Arthur Goldberg, Stewart Alsop, Walt Rostow and Allen Dulles, to name just a very few. There are others who are now leaders of global industry and finance, professors at some of the nation's finest universities, journalists, eminent jurists and political figures. Others have been linked to Communist activities and discredited. Still others have gone on to serve the nation in the military as well as the intelligence work of the CIA.

The policy and personality clashes are here, but, as in any serious study, the author has maintained an objectivity that is noteworthy, with only now and then a pejorative word leaking into the text.

If the reader is tempted to

go further into this fascinating research, Smith has given extensive footnotes, chapter-by-chapter annotations and appended a massive bibliography. The footnotes serve as backgrounds on individual members of the OSS and, in many cases, to tell what has become of them, even to their current positions in government or civilian life.

Although a quasi-military operation, there was no hard-line discipline right from the inception of the OSS. As a result, there were eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations with Russian, English and French allies, also involved in espionage or diplomacy. These contretemps are all laid out for the serious student, revealing the chaos behind the facade of a united front.

But more than anything else, "OSS" undoubtedly will find its way, in one form or another, into myriad paperbacks and future spy novels, because this definitive work has enough plots thrown away in a sentence or two sprinkled through the pages to keep fiction writers supplied for years.

There have been a few great spy novels, bearing the mark of authenticity in the past 50 years . . . "Ashenden," "Thirty-Nine Steps," "Drink To Yesterday," "The Hour of Maximum Danger" and "The Cold War Swap." Great as they are, they do not have the fascination of the sinuous workings of this real-life bureaucratic operation and its successor that, even now, deserve the serious consideration of every concerned citizen of this or any other democracy.

—Ed Hutsching